

Watts UP: Progress in Puna



United Policyholders has been guiding Hawai'i residents on insurance matters since the Kilauea volcano erupted and released burning lava that destroyed homes and neighborhoods in the Puna region of the Big Island.

Over 220 people attended the first forum we co-hosted in the area, and we've since been in touch with many of them. We're co-hosting two more forums on July 21st and will be training local attorneys on helping clients with insurance matters.

Most of the impacted households are insured by Lloyd's of London under a range of policy forms with varying coverage and exclusion wording. Each impacted homeowner must read their policy documents and get answers to questions that are specific to their individual situation.

Lloyds uses a "Third Party Administrator" to adjust claims (not their own employees). Some households have been paid 66% of their dwelling limits without an explanation of why, but it's a good start. Many

homes that were destroyed were custom, not tract homes, and as usual, many are underinsured.

So far we haven't seen a lot of denials based on lava or related exclusions, but this remains a cause for concern. As we always do, we are helping people understand their coverages, the claim process, and the steps they can take to collect their insurance benefits in full and on time. We stress the importance of documenting/proving their losses through independent estimates from qualified professionals and submitting them to insurers in order to reach fair and prompt settlements.

For a Hawai'i lawyer's insights on the law relevant to these losses, see:

http://www.insurancelawhawaii.com/insurance_law_hawaii/2018/05/coverage-for-loss-caused-by-the-big-islands-volcanic-eruptions.html